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Emergency Plan Put Into Action In Honduras

USAID trains doctor and team on rescue efforts after devastation of Hurricane Mitch



Photo: USAID/Honduras

“Since the training, we are working in a much more organized fashion, and the real advantage is that there was no duplication of efforts by the various institutions participating in the rescue operations.”

- Dr. Florentino Martínez

On the north coast of Honduras, residents still remember that fateful week in October 1998 when Hurricane Mitch caused massive destruction and left many without homes. Five years later, another storm hit with rain pouring down for three straight days on the northern towns of La Masica, Arizona, Esparta El Porvenir and La Ceiba - the third largest city in Honduras.

People in these areas feared that the legacy of Hurricane Mitch would return when heavy rains fell steadily leaving 3,000 people trapped. Reacting to threat of another deadly storm, Dr. Florentino Martínez utilized the skills he developed from USAID. Martínez is a physician in La Ceiba, and currently deputy chief of the Emergency Operations Center which is run by volunteers of the Honduran Permanent Contingency Committee's (COPECO) regional office.

Martínez effectively mobilized all team members for rescue operations while maintaining critical communication with COPECO's national headquarters. The Center moved quickly to evacuate those stranded, administered first aid to the injured, distributed food, and restored electrical power in many towns near La Ceiba. The work of Dr. Martínez and his team helped the community - still rebuilding from the devastation of Central America's most destructive hurricane - to cope with the impact of another severe storm.